

Visions of Paradise #143



from left to right:
Kathy & John Tschischik, Kate & Mark, Jean & Bob Sabella

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Artwork

Terry Jeeves page 15

Out of the Depths

I have been a faithful reader of **Locus** for 38 years, and I consider it an invaluable resource for serious readers of f&sf, both for its regular listings of forthcoming and recent publications, as well as its numerous reviews and various best-of-the-year listings and polls. For that reason, I considered Charles Brown an important person in the sf universe, and his unexpected death is a big blow to sf criticism and news. Fortunately, while there were few similar outlets such as **Locus** for many decades (Andy Porter's **SF Chronicle** being one while it lasted), there are several websites which serve a similar purpose now. *SF Signal*, *SF Scope* and *SF Site News* are all valuable outlet for news, while the number of current review sites far surpass the number of fanzines which carried reviews at any given time.

The editors of **Locus** seem willing and able to continue it, including Mark Kelly who runs the *Locus Online* website, all of which was apparently anticipated by Brown who arranged things so that **Locus** would survive him. That is good news for those of us who crave reviews and news about sf on a regular basis.

In some ways, Charles Brown was divisive in the sf community. There seemed to have been as many people who admired him as disliked him. From what I can gather, some of the latter people disagreed with Brown's agenda for **Locus**, while others were jealous of his success in the fan community (such as his winning the Hugo Award virtually every single year). The latter is sour grapes, in my opinion, while the former is inevitable since you cannot please all the people all the time.

My personal complaint with **Locus** has always been the fact that it tends to concentrate on certain sf writers while ignoring others who are equally deserving of attention. Considering the huge number of sf books published annually, I realize it is impossible to review every important book by every author, but some of the authors **Locus** ignored were winning awards on a fairly regular basis. I always thought that **Locus** favored "cutting edge" authors rather than traditionalists, an opinion which was apparently verified by Jonathan Strahan at his blog <http://www.jonathanstrahan.com.au/wp/>. Strahan is a longtime acquaintance of Charles Brown who reviewed books for **Locus** before becoming its fiction editor. In his memorializing Brown, he made the statement:

He also did everything he could to influence [science fiction], to make it what he thought it should be. He published Locus to influence the field. He ran the Locus Awards to influence (by example) the Hugos.

I have no problem with that agenda, but it explains some of the trends and directions in **Locus**. I wonder if that agenda will change much, if at all, with new people having control of its contents.

The Passing Scene

The Wedding!

Jean and I went to Oriskany, New York, on **Thursday, July 2**, where we spent a few days helping her 89-year old aunt Ceil with chores, then brought her back for Mark & Kate's wedding. We arrived late Thursday afternoon after a five-hour trip, including a lunch stop at Subway. While we ate the beef stew Ceil made for dinner, she told us that two different people want to buy her house, even though it is not on the market, for \$65,000 (it is a small house, and the housing prices in that area are incredibly low). She said she would like to sell it and move to Colorado to be near her son Billy, his three children and her several great-grandchildren.

While Jean and I were sleeping in Ceil's bed that night—since it is the only bed big enough for two people; Ceil slept in the spare bed in the other bedroom—one of its legs collapsed, so we spent most of the night sleeping on an angle.

Friday we mostly gardened and fixed the bed. Afterwards we drove 25 miles to Sylvan Beach where Jean's family had a summer home for 80 years. Jean and Peter inherited it upon the death of their aunt Mary, but it was an 80-year old wreck by then so they immediately sold it. It is still there though, obviously unusable, and looking like an eyesore in the midst of all the other well-kept summer homes. Sylvan Beach seems to be thriving, although certainly not on the level of the Jersey Shore. We walked around the beach, and ate dinner at Eddie's Restaurant, which is really a fancy diner. On the way back to Oriskany we stopped at a milk bar which had delicious flavored soft ice cream. I had strawberry shortcake, which was excellent.

Saturday morning Jean and I tried to repair Ceil's toilet which would not stop filling, but we did not have the proper tools. So we put it off until we returned with Ceil two weeks later, since we wanted to get back home that day.

When I got back, I had a *friend request* on Facebook from a student in my wonderful Academy Algebra 2 class a decade ago. She is now a middle school teacher expecting her first child in January. She and I had a nice chat. This is why I really enjoy being part of Facebook, and why I'm glad I decided to eliminate my pseudonym. Of my 42 friends on Facebook, 15 are former students and 21 are sf fans.

Tuesday, July 7 was Jean and my 30th wedding anniversary, proof again that time really flies by! Mark asked Jean if he can announce that fact at his wedding, but Jean refused, wisely since I am sure we would have been required to dance *alone* if Mark made a scene about it. Jean, Ceil and I went to Pasta Grille for our anniversary dinner. I had lasagna, Jean had chicken parmigiana, and Ceil had eggplant parmigiana. Then we went to the 3-D Pixar movie *Up*, which was cute.

We had lots of chores to do before Jean's family started arriving for the wedding, including finalizing plans for the rehearsal dinner, get my car's oil changed, and rearrange the paperbacks on my bookshelf since I moved all my cds to the new shelf in Mark's former room, giving me

more bookshelf space.

Wednesday evening, July 9, Jean and Ceil went to Newark Airport to pick up Jean's sister-in-law Susan (who works at SMU in Dallas) and her younger nephew Jesse (who works in Florida). Fortunately, their flights arrived within two hours of each other. I stayed home since my car would have been much too crowded with 5 people in it. After they arrived, we sat and chatted awhile, catching up on what's happening in both families.

Her brother Peter and older nephew Gabe left Rock, Hill, South Carolina (where Peter lives alone, working at Winthrop University) early Thursday morning by car. They stopped to visit friends at lunchtime, so they arrived here after Jean and I left at 5:30 pm for the rehearsal. The rehearsal took a half-hour, and everybody seemed prepared for their role in the wedding.

At 7:30 pm we arrived at Portafino Restaurant for dinner, 25 people total. Peter, Susan, Gabe & Jesse arrived almost immediately after we did. It was a very good meal with lots of Italian food. The first course was appetizers: antipasto, stuffed mushrooms, stuffed clams, eggplant rollatini, fried calamari, Italian bread; second course was salad; third course was penne with vodka sauce. There were 6 options for the entree: chicken francese, chicken caruso (with eggplant and cheese topping), veal marsala, veal piccolo, broiled tilapia, and tilapia with mussels and clams. I had the chicken caruso and it was delicious.

Kate's parents brought wine and an ice cream cake. Jean and I sat with Kate's parents, Peter & Susan, Ceil and Kate's grandma (who got very friendly with Ceil at last year's engagement party). We all left about 10:30 pm, tired but having had a nice evening.

Everybody at our house slept late **Friday, July 10**, unlike at Kate's house where they were in a typical pre-wedding frenzy. We did not do much all morning. I took a walk with Peter while Susan went with Jean who got her hair done.

About mid-morning Mark's best man Trevor and his girlfriend arrived from the hotel where they had stayed overnight and where many of the TCNJ crowd were staying after the wedding. We all had some pictures taken in our tuxedos before we left for our various assigned roles in Kate's wedding timetable which she had sent out earlier in the week. Mark, Andy, Trevor and PJ (Kate's brother) went to the hotel where they were picked up by the limo while Jean and I left home at 1:45 pm to meet our niece Janel at the church where she gave out programs and we greeted people arriving for the wedding. Peter, Susan, Gabe, Jesse and Ceil arrived at the church about 2:15 pm.

The ceremony went well, and the priest Father Matt was really down-to-earth and funny at times. Afterwards, we all drove to Perona Farms where the wedding party and families had pictures taken for nearly an hour. The cocktail hour lasted from 6:30-7:30 pm and the weather was so nice we all mingled on the patio eating delicious hor d'oeuvres, including smoked salmon, which is Perona Farms' specialty.

The reception itself lasted from 7:30–11:30 pm and was lots of fun. After the bridal party was

introduced, Kate danced with Mark, then Kate danced with her father John. Then Jean danced with Mark, but she did not want to dance alone with 120 people watching, so Kate and John danced with them. Meanwhile, I mentioned to Kate's mom Kathy that she and I should "cut in," and she replied, "Can we?" I assured her we could do whatever we wanted, so she agreed to it. Halfway through the song (Louis Armstrong's *Wonderful World*), she and I walked onto the dance floor, where she took John away from Kate, I took Jean away from Mark who then danced with Kate. So we three couples danced the rest of the song (which is the picture on the cover of this issue). Everybody said that was a very nice touch, but it was purely an instinct on my part.

Our table was right next to Mark & Kate's table, consisting of Jean, me, Ceil, Peter, Susan, Gabe, Jesse, and our close friends Alan and Denise. Fei Fei and Silvio were supposed to sit with us too, but they could not get out of an important Vision conference in Beijing that weekend. The dinner was buffet style with 4 stations: one had chicken in lemon sauce, roast pork, and baked fish. The second station had roasted potatoes, steamed vegetables, and eggplant parmigiana. The third had three types of pasta (the best being penne in vodka), while the fourth was a roast beef carving station. All the food was delicious. My brother David said it was the best wedding food he had ever eaten, which was a fairly common sentiment.

There was dancing all night, although most of it was fast dances, so only the younger people danced a lot. Ceil (88 years old!) danced several times with Peter, Alan (a fast dance which I feared would give her a heart attack) and a line dance with about 2/3 of the attendees dancing around the floor. Andy was probably the most visible dancer all night, so much so that the deejay introduced "Andy and the boys" all wearing funny hats to dance to *YMCA*.

We had a crowded house **Saturday, July 11**, with Jean's brother's family spending most of the weekend there. Kate and Mark arrived about mid-morning to open their gifts and count their money. They had created a Flickr account at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/40122154@N03/> where several wedding attendees uploaded pictures for viewing. By the end of the weekend there were 28 pages of pictures there already.

Mark and Kate left mid-afternoon to go to her parents' house, then her father drove them to Newark Airport where they stayed overnight before shuttling to the terminal for their early flight Sunday morning to Hawaii. They stayed one week at Maui one week and another week at Oahu.

We all awoke between 6-6:30 am **Sunday, July 12** for various departures. Peter and Susan drove to Dallas where Peter stayed for the rest of July. Jean and I drove Gabe and Jesse to Newark Airport. Gabe was returning to Japan where he has lived the past half-dozen years. First he taught English, but now he is attending grad school there. Jesse flew back to Florida. By 9:00 am we were home in a house which was finally neat and not crowded with people, only Jean, Andy, Ceil and me. Before Peter's family left, we made tentative plans to all get together again next summer for a week in North Carolina's Outer Banks.

Mark phoned at 9:00 pm telling us that they landed in Hawaii (which we knew since Jean checked the plane's status online) and that they would post pictures of it periodically.

Wondrous Stories

I have been a fan of Stephen Baxter's short fiction for nearly two decades, including his wondrous collection **Resplendent**. But, for some unexplained reason, I never read any of his novels. I decided to start with **The Time Ships**, since it is a standalone novel while many of his others fall into various series. It was also an award-winning novel, taking the John W. Campbell Memorial Award in 1996.

The Time Ships is a direct sequel to H.G. Wells' **The Time Machine**, beginning soon after the nameless time traveler's return to late 19th century England, so a knowledge of that earlier novel is necessary to fully appreciate what takes place in Baxter's novel. But considering that **The Time Machine** is one of the seminal novels in sf, it is hard to imagine readers of **VoP** not having read it at some point in their lives. And if you have not read it, why not? Wells is the father of science fiction, and all of his early novels are worth reading for several reasons: their historical value to the sf field, their introduction of most of sf's major themes and, most importantly, they are all damned good novels. Both **The Time Machine** and **The War of the Worlds** are necessary reading, but nearly as important are **The Invisible Man**, **The Food of the Gods**, **The Island of Doctor Moreau**, **In the Days of the Comet** and **The First Men in The Moon**.

But great as Wells was, a direct sequel to one of his novels would be boring if it were merely more of the same, especially at 500+ pages. Fortunately, Stephen Baxter is much too good a writer to fall into that trap. A Baxter story is typically based on a scientific notion whose philosophical and speculative effects he then examines. In **The Time Ships** the narrator (the time traveler) returns to the future but encounters a totally different future than he found on his first trip. The Morlocks are no longer degenerate humans, but a race which is highly-advanced both technologically and philosophically. After spending time there, he escapes back to the 19th century with one of the Morlocks named Nebogipfel where they meet the young narrator in 1873 and ultimately the three of them are trapped in 1938 during the 24th year of a brutal world war which began between England and Germany in 1914.

The Time Ships is primarily concerned with the *many worlds* theory of Physics, which postulates that every action a person performs creates several possible universes, in each of which the person actually performed a different action, or else the one action caused several different possible outcomes. This theory is discussed by the narrator and Nebogipfel at length—and Baxter's discussions are fascinating reading—and mathematician Kurt Godel even shows up as a character in the book. The narrator's adventures during the Morlock-dominated future are interesting, but even better are when he and Nebogipfel return first to the 19th century, then to 1938, and eventually fifty million years in the past where they create a new settlement of trapped humans which they name First London.

Most of the novel is fascinating reading, both because of Baxter's story-telling skills, but also for the interplay between the narrator and Nebogipfel who serves as a brilliant mentor to the narrator's simple student. While **The Time Ships** is not a classic as was its prequel **The Time Machine**, it is still very interesting and always enjoyable reading, and I recommend it highly.

*

Andre Norton is a Nebula Grandmaster whose audience is as devoted as those of almost any science fiction writer. In fact, it is probably fair to say that Norton's baby boomers equal Heinlein's children for fervor and lifetime loyalty. However, similarly to my reading of Heinlein's juveniles, I have read virtually none of Norton's output previously, so I am reading them for the first time in middle age after decades of reading sf, so I did not expect to have the same rapturous view of them as many of her most devoted fans. I decided to start with her *Time Traders* series since it is one of her more highly-acclaimed sf series.

The first volume in the series is entitled **The Time Traders** and it tells the story of a small-time punk named Ross Murdoch who has already served some minor jail time and is on the verge of doing more time until he is recruited by an organization which travels back in time engaging in a Cold War against the Russians (*not* the Soviets, since Norton was clever enough to foresee the breakup of the Soviet Union). It is a fairly routine pulp adventure, with minimal characterization, and plotting which seems almost made up as the author went along.

The second volume **Galactic Derelict** was considerably better. The same group of people with the addition of an Apache rancher named Travis get trapped in an alien spacecraft which takes them to several worlds where they encounter aliens both vicious and friendly. While there is little plot to the novel, it contains plenty of sense of wonder and interaction between the mostly-clueless humans and aliens with whom they can neither communicate with nor comprehend their motives. Still, they do nothing foolish and while there is some routine adventure, it does not take away from the interest of the aliens and their worlds.

Overall, **Time Traders** was slightly disappointing considering all the acclaim Norton has received for so many years. While both novels were easy reading, they were more on the level of such writers as Mack Reynolds or C.C. MacApp than comparable to either Poul Anderson's *Polesotechnic League* stories or Murray Leinster's *Med Ship* series. But, of course, one novel is certainly not representative of an author's entire career. Imagine if the first Roger Zelazny novel I had read was **A Night in the Lonesome October**, or the first Samuel R. Delany was **Equinox**. Reading **Galactic Derelict** made it apparent that Norton had not reached her stride in the series with the first book, and once she rid herself of the Cold War thriller stuff and delved more into traditional science fiction, she had a fairly interesting series going. I will definitely read the next two books to see where Norton takes them.

A point of interest: all the chapters in both books are exactly 10 pages long. I wonder if that was an arbitrary breaking point imposed by the editor, or did Norton intentionally write her fiction in equal-sized lumps, in the method of A.E. Van Vogt who deliberately introduced a new twist every so many words?

*

There are several qualities which make good fiction, such as characterization, thought-provoking ideas, sense of wonder, outstanding writing. But there is one quality which, if done well enough, can trump all of them, and that is good storytelling.

Stephen Lawhead is a very good storyteller, and **Byzantium** shows him at the peak of his abilities. It was so enjoyable that, upon finishing it, I immediately wanted to buy more of his books, even his long series, and dive right into them. It did not hurt that the book was set during one of my favorite historical eras, the Middle Ages when European culture was disintegrating and all the interesting events were taking place in the Middle East and Asia.

The narrator of **Byzantium** was Aidan, an Irish monk who was part of an expedition to bring a gorgeous hand-written book to the emperor of Byzantium. However, the journey was disastrous as the participants were attacked by Sea Wolves—whom we now call Vikings because when they went on voyages of plunder they went *a-viking*—and Aidan became a slave to one of the Danes. This led to a series of events which eventually made him the slave of King Harald of the Danes who initiated a sea voyage to plunder the legendary city of Byzantium. However, after spending some time in the city, Harald soon realized that plundering it was a foolish endeavor, so instead he and his men became mercenaries in the hire of Emperor Basil.

The Sea Wolves' first assignment was serving as bodyguards to a diplomatic mission into Islamic country, another mission doomed to failure as they were attacked by a large group of Saracens who took all the survivors, including Aidan, as prisoners and forced them to be slaves in the caliph's silver mines.

Lawhead keeps events moving swiftly, and changes occur at a rapid pace. He is obviously enamored with history, since whenever the novel changes location, from Ireland to Denmark to Constantinople to an Islamic city, he gives us a tour of each location and spends considerable time exploring its wonders and culture. In some ways, **Byzantium** is a written museum of medieval history and a tour of medieval civilizations. For a lover of history, the book is worthwhile for that aspect alone.

While characterization is not emphasized, we learn much about the nature of the Danesmen, the inhabitants of Constantinople, and the Arabs. While many seem totally evil when Aidan first encounters them (the viciousness of the Sea Wolves' attack, their initial treatment of their captive slaves, the arrogance of the officials in Constantinople, a similar viciousness by the Arabs), as Aidan becomes close to individuals in each group we learn that a member of a vicious culture is not necessarily a vicious individual.

Obviously, **Byzantium** has flaws. Some changes in Aidan's situation occur much too easily. He goes from being a slave in the silver mines on the verge of death to an intimate advisor of an amir almost overnight. But because of Lawhead's wonderful storytelling abilities, these flaws are acceptable, similar to the one suspension of disbelief in a speculative fiction. And only once does a major character act in a foolish manner which forwards the plot unfairly. In all other instances, Lawhead creates believable people acting in logical ways.

I recommend **Byzantium** highly both for its storytelling and its glimpse at various medieval cultures. Its' 870 pages literally flew by.

Halcyon Days

Eric Mayer

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May 7, 2009

I am sorry to hear about Misty. Our cat Sabrina is 20 so, realistically, she does not have a lot more time with us, but she seems healthy and I try not to think about it. Sabrina dates back to another marriage, another place, a whole other life. My brother's cat Tommy, which he inherited from my grandmother, made it to 22.

I well recall the ritual of burying animals in the backyard. My parent's house was next to my father's parents, who had lived in the same place for years and had a constant stream of pets. I guess the flower beds must have been filled with their remains because they were usually buried there. These were huge beds, filled with old-fashioned flowers like phlox. The flowers are gone now, the place having new owners.

It pained me to leave one of our cats buried in the backyard of the house we left in Rochester. So, the last cat who died, we had cremated and his remains are on the shelf in the office.

Like you, I feel the need to exercise more. Only I generally detest exercise. It's boring and tends to hurt. I used to love running but my back refuses to let me do that these days. I guess there's no such thing as aerobic typing....?

I do believe that vegetarianism is healthy. Mary and I went to a vegetarian diet more than a decade ago. It's been slightly modified in the past year but we still eat hardly any meat. Of course it was easy for me to go vegetarian since I was never that keen on meat to begin with. I always insisted my steaks be reduced to charcoal. No hint of blood for me, thank you. No reminders of what I was ingesting. I preferred chicken which was a tabla rasa for sauces and other non-meat flavorings.

Congratulations on having a contract. Hopefully it is long enough that you won't have to worry about that again. The place where my brother works is right now going through that whole contract negotiation thing and it isn't fun. Needing to go to a PPO wouldn't bother me either. I've never been to a private doctor since my childhood. My family had a family doctor we all went to—in my case a lot when I was young and never after junior high school. Then when I went to college I went without any health care. When I went to work, the health benefits were limited to an HMO. So I've never cared about the debate over preserving so-called health choices. I've never been able to afford such choices.

I'm sure this is a busy time for you. Coincidentally, Mary and I are working on "finals" tidying up the eighth mystery book. I don't like having deadlines just at this time of year. I am reminded too much of the stress of all those ends of semesters. You must have a different sort of stress. Soon, however, it will be summer.

[We have two cats buried in our yard, Misty and Fei Fei's cat Koki, and presumably Tiger will be there eventually, so I have wondered about eventually selling the house someday. That seems a bit like abandoning them.]

Robert Kennedy

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May 10, 2009

Thank you for #140. Nice cover of your cats. I am truly sorry to learn about Misty and you have my condolences. A number of years ago one of my cats who was about 15 years old became rather listless and didn't eat much. I picked her up and felt a large lump on her underside. So. It was off to the vet. It was obviously a tumor. An operation would have been expensive and questionable and life expectancy doubtful. So, I had her put away. Having a pet die or put away is always heartbreaking. Yet, it happens rather often because their life spans are so much shorter than ours.

In my March 6, 2009, printed loc the word "not" was inserted in a sentence where it did not appear in my submitted loc. This completely changed the meaning. Printed sentence: "I do not read any Dean Koontz and Vince Flynn." Submitted sentence: "I do read any Dean Koontz and Vince Flynn." (Koontz and Flynn are two of my favorite non-SF authors.) I attribute what happened to the Bavarian Illuminati who like to harass me periodically. ☺

If **Julia Morgan-Scott** keeps to her plan not to do any more fan art it will be a great loss. As I have mentioned before, she is one of my favorite artists.

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May 14, 2009

Thank you for *Visions of Paradise* 140. Pets are here with us to teach us about love, responsibility and grief when they die. We enjoy their time on earth, and they prepare us for other and greater times of grief. We don't have dogs or cats of our own, seeing that with our crazy schedules, it wouldn't be fair to them to be left alone, but we enjoy the pets of the other people in our building, and in June there's a pet festival in downtown Toronto called Woofstock, and we will go and enjoy lots of assorted dogs and cats and other animals too.

I think most of us have relatively good diets, but we spend so much of our day trying to make a living, and so little time for exercise. We are also victims of advertising that tells us that we can spoil ourselves because we deserve it, and as a result we eat too much and are overweight to show for it.

The single time I met Roger Zelazny, I found out that most people didn't know what he looked like. I discovered that he was painfully shy, and not really comfortable with accepting compliments on his writing. He was to come to our convention for the second time when we found out the Friday of the convention that he had passed away in his sleep, and his bags packed. We had to break the news to our attendees the same day. Roger's passing even made the cover of the **Toronto Star**.

To **Julia Morgan-Scott**...a shame you won't be doing any more fan art, but many thanks for that art you have done. I hope you'll return to it once the muse comes back.

Recently saw a picture of Harlan Ellison...I didn't recognize him, mostly because he's seen from the side. He's completely grey, and has gained a lot of weight. (I'm a fine one to talk...) As much as I like his writing, I am not sure I'd pay attention to anything he'd say to me.

Our Hugo ballots are in the mail...I think we both voted for *WALL-E* for best Dramatic Presentation - Long Form. Once again there are so few categories I can vote on, but I do feel it's important to do that voting. I think we both voted for *Challenger* to win for Best Fanzine.

June 11, 2009:

Many thanks for issue #141. I haven't seen artwork from Franz Miklis in a while, and I haven't heard from him either. I should see if I still have a current e-mail address. Good artwork, as always.

I don't go to many movies either, but I am hoping to get a little time to see the newest Pixar movie *Up!* It's been described as Pixar's best yet, which is high praise. We've bought a surprising number of DVDs lately...I bought for Yvonne all five Harry Potter movies, and we recently purchased *Steamboy* (combination steampunk and anime), *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* and a documentary on SF moviemakers called *The Sci-Fi Boys*.

I didn't get many books when I was little, even though I could read from a precocious age. I guess even then books were comparatively expensive. I remember my earliest books were cartoon books, like *Peanuts* and *B.C.*, plus the series of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!* paperbacks. I wish I'd had books like the *Oz* series. Coming from a French-Canadian household, Yvonne grew up with *Tintin* and *Asterix et Obelix*.

There's nothing I like more than having a wall of books. Yvonne and I have had that for most of our married lives. Because the computer's in the shop, I am in the living room working on Yvonne's laptop, and I can see our current wall of books. It needs reorganizing and perhaps a small weeding.

Are children banned from bringing iPods and camera phones in the school in which you teach? Even now, there are efforts to ban texting while driving, and people are killed because they wander onto the road while their attention is completely taken up by their iPod or handheld game or reading something on their cellphones. Such a ban would be fine with me; I have to deal with

a lot of noise coming from total strangers on the bus or subway.

I have read a ton of Asimov, Heinlein and Clarke, but there's also Simak, Silverberg, Zelazny and Anderson, all of which I discovered afterwards. There's still more of their works to discover and read, and recently, I've read **Simak's Shakespeare's Planet, Cosmic Engineers and Ring Around the Sun**, Silverberg's **Across a Billion Years** and **Project Pendulum**, and Anderson's **Past Times**. One author not listed here, but who should be, is Frederik Pohl. Just lately, I've read **The Far Shore of Time, The Other End of Time, STAR #4, Tales From The Planet Earth** and **The Coming of the Quantum Cats**. Classic SF, and I am always looking for more.

July 25, 2009:

Many thanks for issue 142. I applaud going back and seeing what got on the [Hugo] ballot but didn't win. I don't think I'd want to second guess the voters, especially back then, but anything that was voted onto the ballot must have been pretty good. Just like today.

You've had some excellent students, Robert...all I can say that I wouldn't have come even close to them, and math was among my best subjects. I was pretty good with second derivatives and such. If there were any dinners at the end of the year, I was not invited to any of them, and I say that not only for high school, but also for university.

Yeah, I am now 50 years old. I am growing old. But, I'm not about to grow up, and you can't make me! So there! NYEEAAHH! (Love to do a cameo on the Simpsons...)

[I also read many of the *Tintin* books as a child, in translation, of course!

[iPods, cameras, and cell phones are forbidden at my school, and the penalties for having them exposed are fairly severe. The exception is that iPods can be used in the cafeteria.

[You confused me a bit. I'd never heard of Poul Anderson's **Past Times** until I did some research and saw that was one of his collections. And I believe **Tales From Planet Earth** was by Arthur C. Clarke, not by Frederik Pohl.]

Gene Stewart

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Jul 1, 2009

I've virtually given up, and given up on, SF, but I disagree with your sour assessment of **The Gods Themselves** by Asimov. It is my favorite of his books.

I would suggest this dichotomy arises due to how literary it is, at least in structure.

[That is an interesting assessment of **The Gods Themselves**. Usually I enjoy more literary sf books, but my memory of that book is 35 years old, and my taste has certainly changed during

that time period. Perhaps I should reread the book for a more recent opinion of it.]

Henry L. Welch

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Jul 19, 2009

Thanks for the latest three issues of Visions of Paradise.

#138: I am distressed by the vast majority of people who seem to aspire to nothing. They go to work, come home, and do little but drink beer and watch TV. Sometimes I feel like I'm in that rut and then I go find one or more projects to put my time into.

#140: My condolences on Misty.

In response to **John Purcell: José Sánchez**, the artist, has been around for years. I'd periodically receive a stack of his art (mostly cover size) and then hear nothing else from him for years. Haven't gotten anything from him in a while, so I don't know what he is up to.

Rich Dengrove

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#139. *The Passing Scene*. The fantasy that [teachers] are overpaid for very little work is a conservative thing. Unfortunately, enough people believed it so Bush received kudos for getting No Child Left Behind passed, and you up to here in paperwork. A cousin of mine retired from teaching because of it. Last I heard, she was theoretically teaching part-time although she got gigs from her old school whenever she wanted them. The advantage was she didn't have to do the paperwork.

Another comment: I may know one reason **Worlds of If** magazine, in the '60s, was not as high quality as **F&SF**, **Analog** and **Galaxy**. If what Frederick Pohl claimed was true, at least one story per issue was by an unpublished author. Wouldn't that have been a turnoff for the more popular authors?

#140. *Halcyon Days*. **Eric Mayer** was talking about having the time to publish books. It would be nice if the short story era was still upon us. However, the philosophy these days is that any clown can write a short story. To write a novel takes a very determined clown. Yes, I'm paraphrasing someone.

Eric is right that the most pretentious writers believe it is a great revelation that the world is awful. And such pessimism is more likely to be taken as serious literature. I remember the cartoon show *Rocky and His Friends* had a "Fractured Fairy Tale" segment, where a shoemaker

was trying to make a shoe with a soul. To this end, two elves give him advice. One bit is that he should suffer.

#141. Will F. Jenkins Day. I heard once he wrote under the pseudonym Murray Leinster because Leinster is a county in Ireland. I guess he took his Irish blood very much to heart.

The Passing Scene. The story of your early life begets a short version of mine. My parents told me that I was born in St. Petersburg, Florida and they took me up to North Carolina at three months. Then they took me to Interlaken, New Jersey at six months. There, they bought a Tudor style house and settled. That is where I spent my childhood. My very first memory was wondering whether I should become a cowboy or a spaceman. I decided a spaceman; and, in a way, I kept to that decision.

#142. So that's what you look like. You look like a good guy, but we knew that from your zine.

Out of the Depths. It galls people when authors win Hugos because of their personal popularity rather than the merits of their writing. However, I am not certain there isn't a problem with judging those merits. It always means comparing apples and oranges. Space opera and Martian Chronicles. While it's fun to choose the best in any diverse category, we really can't take it too seriously.

Wondrous Stories. Yes, I too am nostalgic for SF with no violence in it. You could do it in the old days. You could even have police dramas in the old days without much violence. I saw a *Dragnet* from the '50s recently. It was all character driven; the only violence in it was a ten second scuffle.

[I don't think that **IF**'s "first story" policy affected the established authors much since they were still getting paid for their stories, which was more important than the company they kept. The reputation at the time was that **If** was really **World of Galaxy Rejects**, containing primarily stories which Pohl rejected for **Galaxy**, but it is hard to imagine him rejecting Heinlein's **The Moon is a Harsh Mistress**, which originally appeared in **IF**. I believe that Pohl intended **Galaxy** to contain "serious" fiction while **IF** contained primarily adventure fiction.]



The In-Box

Many of the zines below are available at <http://www.efanzines.com>

Alexiad / Lisa & Joseph Major / 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, KY 40204-2040 / regular reviewzine concerned with sf, nonfiction, horse racing and candy!

Argentus / Steven Silver / 707 Sapling Lane, Deerfield, IL 60015-3969 / annual genzine

Askance / John Purcell / very good example of a genzine

Ben's Beat / Ben Indick, 428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666 / personalzine with an emphasis on plays and books

Celtic Seasons / Rita & Richard Shader / 2593 Chapparal Drive, Melbourne, FL 32934-8275 / fascinating glimpses at Scottish history and culture

Challenger / The Zine Dump / Guy H. Lillian III / P.O. Box 53092, New Orleans, LA 70153-3092 /available at www.challzine.net / one of the finest genzines being published

Chunga / Andy Hooper, Randy Byers, carl juarez / 1013 North 36th St., Seattle, WA 98103 / probably the most traditional fanzine currently being published

The Drink Tank / Chris Garcia / perhaps the most regular online personalzine

File 770 / Mike Glycer /705 Valley View Ave., Monrovia, CA 01016 / fannish news and reviews; check the blog <http://file770.com/> for regular updates

For The Clerisy / Brant Kresovich / P.O. Box 404, Getzville, NY 14068 / chockful of interesting book reviews

It Goes on the Shelf / Ned Brooks / 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 / book reviews

The Knarley Knews / Henry Welch / 1525 16th Ave., Grafton, WI 53024-2017 / very regular genzine

Lofgeornost / Fred Lerner / 81 Worcester Ave., White River Junction, VT 05001 / personalzine with a penchant for international travel

Opuntia / Dale Speirs / Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7 / reviews, articles, and letters

Quasiquote / Sandra Bond / 7 Granville Road, London N13 4RR, UK / genzine

The Reluctant Famulus / Tom Sadler / 305 Gill Branch Rd., Owenton, KY 40359 / long-

running genzine

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette / Garth Spencer / personalzine with lots of letters

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin / R.B. Cleary / 470 Ridge Road, Birmingham, AL 35206-2816 / clubzine with news, conreports and reviews

Steam Engine Time / Bruce Gillespie and Janine Stinson / P.O. Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 / genzine with lots of reviews

This Here / Nic Farey / PO Box 178, Saint Leonard, MD 20685 / personalzine

Trial and Air / Michael W. Waite / 105 West Ainsworth, Ypsilanti, MI 48197-5336 / gorgeous genzine

Vanamonde / John Hertz / 236 S. Coronado St., No 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057 / two-page APazine with brief comments on a variety of topics

On the Lighter Side

Jokes from Lloyd Penney

The day finally arrived. Forrest Gump dies and goes to Heaven. He is at the Pearly Gates, met by St. Peter himself. However, the gates are closed, and Forrest approaches the gatekeeper.

St. Peter said, "Well, Forrest, it is certainly good to see you. We have heard a lot about you. I must tell you, though, that the place is filling up fast, and we have been administering an entrance examination for everyone. The test is short, but you have to pass it before you can get into Heaven."

Forrest responds, "It sure is good to be here, St. Peter, sir. But nobody ever told me about any entrance exam. I sure hope that the test ain't too hard. Life was a big enough test as it was."

St. Peter continued, "Yes, I know, Forrest, but the test is only three questions. First: What two days of the week begin with the letter T? Second: How many seconds are there in a year? Third: What is God's first name?"

Forrest leaves to think the questions over. He returns the next day and sees St. Peter, who waves him up, and says, "Now that you have had a chance to think the questions over, tell me your answers"

Forrest replied, "Well, the first one --- which two days in the week begins with the letter "T"? Shucks, that one is easy. That would be Today and Tomorrow."

The Saint's eyes opened wide and he exclaimed, "Forrest, that is not what I was thinking, but you do have a point, and I guess I did not specify, so I will give you credit for that answer. How about the next one?" asked St. Peter.

"How many seconds in a year? Now that one is harder," replied Forrest, but I think and think about that, and I guess the only answer can be twelve."

Astounded, St. Peter said, "Twelve? Twelve? Forrest, how in Heaven's name could you come up with twelve seconds in a year?"

Forrest replied, "Shucks, there's got to be twelve: January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd... "

"Hold it," interrupts St. Peter. "I see where you are going with this, and I see your point, though that was not quite what I had in mind....but I will have to give you credit for that one, too. Let us go on with the third and final question. Can you tell me God's first name"?

"Sure," Forrest replied, "it's Andy."

"Andy?" exclaimed an exasperated and frustrated St Peter. "Ok, I can understand how you came up with your answers to my first two questions, but just how in the world did you come up with the name Andy as the first name of God?"

"Shucks, that was the easiest one of all," Forrest replied. "I learnt it from the song, "ANDY WALKS WITH ME, ANDY TALKS WITH ME, ANDY TELLS ME I AM HIS OWN."

St. Peter opened the Pearly Gates, and said: "Run Forrest, run."

*

A tourist walked into a curio shop on the lower East Side of Manhattan. Looking around at the exotica, he noticed a lifelike, oversized silver statue of a cockroach. It had no price tag, but was so striking he decided he must have it. He took it to the owner, asking, "How much for the silver cockroach?"

"Twenty five dollars for the statue, two hundred dollars for the story," said the owner.

The tourist gave the man twenty five dollars. "I'll just take the roach, you can keep the story." As he walked down the street carrying his oversized silver cockroach, he noticed that a few real roaches had crawled out of the alleys and sewers and began following him down the street. He began walking faster. But within a couple blocks, the herd of roaches behind him had grown to hundreds. He began to trot toward the river, looking around to see that the roaches now numbered in the millions, and were coming towards him faster. Terrified, he ran to the edge of the river and threw the silver cockroach as far out into the river as he could. Amazingly, the millions of roaches all jumped into the river after it, and were all drowned. The man quickly

raced back to the curio shop.

"Ah," said the owner, "you have come back for the story?"

"No, no," said the man, "I came back to see if you have a silver lawyer?"

*

Bubba walked into a doctor's office and the receptionist asked him what he had. Bubba said: "Shingles." So she wrote down his name, address, medical insurance number and told him to have a seat. Fifteen minutes later a nurse's aide came out and asked Bubba what he had. Bubba said, "Shingles." So she wrote down his height, weight, a complete medical history and told Bubba to wait in the examining room.

Half an hour later a nurse came in and asked Bubba what he had. Bubba said, "Shingles." So the nurse gave Bubba a blood test, a blood pressure test, an electrocardiogram, and told Bubba to take off all his clothes and wait for the doctor.

An hour later the doctor came in and found Bubba sitting patiently in the nude and asked Bubba what he had. Bubba said, "Shingles." The doctor asked, "Where?" Bubba said, "Outside on the truck. Where do you want me to unload 'em??"

*

A very successful lawyer parks his brand-new Lexus in front of his office, ready to show it off to his colleagues. As he gets out, a truck passes too closely and completely rips off the door on the driver's side.

The lawyer immediately grabs his cell phone, dials 911, and within minutes a policeman pulls up. Before the officer has a chance to ask any questions, the lawyer starts screaming hysterically that his Lexus, which he had just bought the day before, is now completely ruined and would never be the same, no matter what the body shop did to it.

When the lawyer finally calms down a bit, the officer shakes his head in disgust and disbelief. "I can't believe how materialistic you lawyers are," he says. "You are so focused on your possessions that you don't notice anything else."

"How can you say such a thing?" asks the lawyer.

The cop replies, "Don't you know that your left arm is missing from the elbow down? It must have been torn off when the truck hit you."

"My God!" screams the lawyer. "Where's my Rolex?!"